Sweet Comfort for Feeble Saints

A Sermon
(No. 6)
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 4, 1855, by the
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At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory"—Matthew 12:20.

Babbling fame ever loves to talk of one man or another. Some there be whose glory it trumpets forth, and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites, and their names are carved on marble, and heard in every land, and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge; she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts, and almost deifies; others, whose virtues are far greater, and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded, and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron, and cast in a rough mould. Fame caresseth Caesar, because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther, because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome, and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox; for he was stern, and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing out the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow-creatures fearless of them; men who were made of courage; who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness, and never knew what timidity might be. But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous, and equally to be esteemed—perhaps even more so—whom fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon—she says but little of him—yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation, as even the mighty Luther. You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford, and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips; or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said, that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm-cloud: she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveller resteth; she wants something bold and prominent; something that courts popularity; something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in shade. Hence it is, my brethren, that the blessed Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except his followers. We do not find his name written amongst the great and mighty men; though, in truth, he is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, purest, and best of men that ever lived; but because he was "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and was emphatically the man whose kingdom is not of this world; because he had nothing of the rough about him, but was all love; because his words were softer than butter, his utterances more gentle in their flow than oil; because

never man spake so gently as this man; therefore he is neglected and forgotten. He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence; but he came to speak with a "still small voice," that melteth the rocky heart; that bindeth up the broken in spirit, and that continually saith, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Jesus Christ was all gentleness; and this is why he has not been extolled amongst men as otherwise he would have been. Beloved! our text is full of gentleness; it seems to have been steeped in love; and I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy and the mighty tenderness of Jesus, as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed: first, *mortal frailty;* secondly, *divine compassion;* and thirdly, *certain triumph*—"till he send forth judgment unto victory."

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILTY

—bruised reed and smoking flax—two very suggestive metaphors, and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful—and if it is I know you will excuse me—I should say that the *bruised reed is an emblem of a sinner in the first stage of his conviction.* The work of God's Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be ploughed up; the hard heart must be broken; the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to heaven without passing hard by the gates of hell—without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it then that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences his operation upon the soul; he is as a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed; there is but little strength in him. *The smoking flax I conceive to be a backsliding Christian;* one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of grace, the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out—not quite—it never can go out, for Christ saith, "I will not quench it;" but it becomes like a lamp when ill supplied with oil—almost useless. It is not quite extinguished—it smokes—it was a useful lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed, and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together, and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak ones.* What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax? A reed that groweth in the fen or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it and it is bruised and broken; every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro, and well nigh tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances that a bruised reed.

Then look at smoking flax—what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true, but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment; nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things,* you see, are here described. Well, Christ says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench; the bruised reed I will not break." Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah! I shall not have to go far. There are many in this house of prayer this morning who are indeed weak. Some of God's children, blessed be his name, are made strong to do mighty works for him; God hath his Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; he hath here and there his mighty Gideons, who can go to the camp of the Midianites, and overthrow their hosts; he hath his mighty men, who can go into the pit in winter, and slay the lions; but the majority of his people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passer by; a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it; if trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it; their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave; and when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea-bird on the crest of the billows; weak things, without strength, without force, without might, without power. Ah! dear friends, I know I have got hold of some of your hands now, and your hearts too; for you are saying, "Weak! Ah, that I am. Full often I am constrained to say, I would, but cannot sing; I would, but cannot pray; I would, but cannot believe." You are saying that you cannot do anything; your best resolves are weak and vain; and when you cry, "My strength renew," you feel weaker than before. You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for you then. I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that he will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up. I know there are some very strong people here—I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, "Do you think that we go into sin, sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing; we are good, and pure, and upright; we have strength and might." To you I am not preaching this morning; to you I am saying nothing; but take heed—your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie—for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away; when you come to the real contest with death, you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it: when one of these days of strong temptation shall come, it will take hold of you, moral man, and down you will go; and the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained, that though you wash your hands in snow water, and make yourselves never so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you. I think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing; the Holy Ghost has made him such. Can you say, "No strength have I?" Then this text is for you.

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy; but I never yet heard of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having. Who would care to have a bruised reed—a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax, what is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing; but the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or smoking flax. Well, then, beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here, who, if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary, and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing—worthless, useless. There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world—when if any one had said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it, and said, "I believe I am as good as other people." You thought yourselves something wonderful—extremely worthy of God's love and regard; but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature—so worthless—not worth his consideration. You can understand how he can look upon an animalcule in a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening; but you can hardly tell how he can think of you, you appear so worthless—a dead blank in the world, a useless thing. You say, "What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the gospel, he is of some service; as for a deacon of the church, he is of some use; as for a Sabbath-school teacher, he is doing some good; but of what service am I?" But you might ask the same question here. What is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself therewith? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan, and make music come from a bruised reed? Ah! no; it is of no service. And of what use is smoking flax? the midnight traveller cannot be lighted by it; the student cannot read by the flame of it. It is of no use; men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah! that is how you talk of yourselves. You are good for nothing, so are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of what use you may be, and you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you after all. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps, she says, "Well, I do not often go out—I keep house with my children, and seem to be doing no good." Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one; and in training up children for the Lord, you are doing as much for his name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the word. And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night, and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day, you have nothing to give away, and when you go to the Sabbath-school, you can just read, you cannot teach much—well, but unto him to whom little is given of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an

empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, so long as God ordered them. So God, in his providence, has called you to work hard for your daily bread; do it to his glory. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to his honor." But, ah! I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the Church. You do all you can; but when you have done it, it is nothing; you can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time, and, therefore, you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah! beloved, talk not so; Jesus Christ saith he will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed; he has something for the useless and for the worthless ones. But mark you, I do not say this to excuse laziness—to excuse those that can do, but do not; that is a very different thing. There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men, and they must have it sometimes. I am speaking now of those who cannot do it; not of Issacher, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens, and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, but of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service—who cannot do more; and to such, the words of the text are applicable.

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an allusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented, and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed, then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes; one unsound tube would so let the air out, as to produce a discordant sound, or no sound at all, so that one's impulse would be to take the pipe out and put in a fresh one. And, as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind, I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive. To me no odour in all the world is so abominably offensive as smoking flax. But some say, "How can you speak in so low a style?" I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me; for I am sure you are, if God the Holy Ghost has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own souls, and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose. I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake, or anything rather than a man, for he felt he was so offensive. Oh! I can conceive a nest of vipers, and I think that they are obnoxious; I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the human heart. God spares from all eyes but his own that awful sight—a human heart; and could you and I but once see our heart, we should be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight. Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God's sight—that you have so rebelled against him, so turned away from his commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning who has departed from the paths of virtue; and, while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts, and stand among God's people. She thinks that God might almost make the chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner. Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax! Though thou art the scorn of man, and loathsome to thyself, yet Jesus saith to thee, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." There is some man here who hath something in his heart that I know not of—who may have committed crimes in secret, that we will not mention in public; his sins stick like a leech to him, and rob him of all comfort. Here you are young man, shaking and trembling, lest your crime should be divulged before high heaven; you are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah! I have a word for thee too. Comfort! comfort! comfort! Despair not; for Jesus saith he will not quench the smoking flax, he will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point. Both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service.* When God puts his hand to a man, if he were worthless and useless before, he can make him very valuable. You know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material to begin with—bruised reeds and smoking flax; but by Divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value. You tell me the bruised reed is good for nothing; I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up, and fit it in the pipes of heaven. Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, "What was that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?" And some one shall say, "It was a bruised reed." Ah! Mary Magdalene's voice in heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other; and the voice of that poor thief, who said "Lord, remember me," if it is a deep bass voice, is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other, because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use. Do not say you are good for nothing; you shall sing up in heaven yet. Do not say you are worthless; at last you shall stand before the throne among the blood-washed company, and shall sing God's praise. Ay! and the smoking flax too, what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere; it is nearly out, but still a spark remaineth. Behold the prairie on fire! See you the flames come rolling on? See you stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched—till heaven is reddened with the flame? Old night's black face is scarred with the burning, and the stars appear affrighted at the conflagration. How was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveller, fanned by the soft wind, till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man, one ignorant man, one weak man, even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation. Who knows but that you who are nothing now, may be of more use than those of us who appear

to stand better before God, because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire—he can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul. You may be useful yet; therefore be of good cheer. Moss groweth upon gravestones; the ivy clingeth to the mouldering pile; the mistletoe groweth on the dead branch; and even so shall grace, and piety, and virtue, and holiness, and goodness, come from smoking flax and bruised reeds.

II. Thus, then, my dear friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant, and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty;

Now I mount a step higher—to DIVINE COMPASSION.

"The bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench."

Notice what is first of all stated, and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ means a great deal more than he says. First of all, what does he say? He says plainly enough that he will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me—a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the law would never stop. It keeps on, lash, lash, lash; and though you say, "Lord, stop it, and give me a little respite," still comes down the cruel thong, lash, lash, lash. You feel your sins. Ah! I know what you are saying this morning: "If God continues this a little longer my heart will break: I shall perish in despair; I am almost distracted by my sin; if I lie down at night I cannot sleep; it appears as if ghosts were in the room—ghosts of my sins—and when I awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me, and saying, 'Thou art my prey, I shall have thee;' while hell behind seems to burn." Ah! poor bruised reed, he will not break you; conviction shall be too strong; it shall be great enough to melt thee, and to make thee go to Jesus' feet; but it shall not be strong enough to break thy heart altogether, so that thou shouldst die. Thou shalt never be driven to despair; but thou shalt be delivered; thou shalt come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shalt not be broken.

So there is a backslider here this morning; he is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord, and such delight in his service, that you said, "There I would for ever stay.

'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.'"

You are smoking, and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I should tell you that he would; but being a believer in the Bible, and nothing else, I tell you that he will not quench you. Though you are smoking, you shall not die. Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says, "Return ye backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon

you." He will not cast thee away, poor Ephraim; only come back to him—he will not despise thee, though thou hast plunged thyself in the mire and dirt, though thou art covered from head to foot with filthiness; come back, poor prodigal, come back, come back! Thy father calls thee. Hearken poor backslider! Come at once to him whose arms are ready to receive thee.

It says he will not quench—he will not break. But there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says he will not break, he means more than that; he means, "I will take that poor bruised reed; I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters, and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither; I will water it every moment; I will watch it; there shall be heavenly fruits upon it; I will keep the birds of prey from it; but the birds of heaven, the sweet songsters of paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches." When he says that he will not break the bruised reed, he means more; he means that he will nourish, that he will help, and strengthen, and support and glorify—that he will execute his commission on it, and make it glorious for ever. And when he says to the backslider that he will not quench him, he means more than that—he means that he will fan him up to a flame. Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from chapel and found that your fire had gone nearly out; I know how you deal with it; you blow gently at the single spark, if there is one, and lest you should blow too hard, you hold your finger before it; and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder, how gently would you blow it. So, backslider, Jesus Christ deals with thee; he does not put thee out; he blows gently; he says, "I will not quench thee;" he means, "I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful;" he will put on dry material, so that by-and-by a little spark shall come to a flame, and blaze up towards heaven, and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a moment to expand this thought, and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master, and great in strength, for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much God's elect as the great saint.* When God chose his people, he chose them all at once, and altogether; and he elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but one is as much chosen as the other; and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest. Again: *the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* the feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones; the tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less than Jesus' precious blood; and the greatest child of God did not cost him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin—I am sure he did not—for I read in the Bible that *"there is no difference."* Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel. The poor shall

bring no less, and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other. Now then little child of God, take that thought to thy soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ's cause—and it is very good that they should be—but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did; he paid the same price for you that he paid for them. Recollect again, *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint.* Some of you have five or six children. There is one child of yours, perhaps, who is very tall and handsome, and has, moreover, gifts of mind; and you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding. But which is the most your child? "The most!" you say; "both alike are my children, certainly, one as much as the other." And so, dear friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about divine things, you may but "see men as trees walking," but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried saint, that *you are just as much justified as any other child of God.* I know that I am completely justified.

His blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

I want no other garments, save Jesus' doings, and his imputed righteousness.

The boldest child of God wants no more; and I who am "less than the least of all saints," can be content with no less, and I shall have no less. O Ready-to-Halt, thou art as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, or the loftiest saint in heaven. There is no difference in that matter. Oh! take courage and rejoice.

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God's honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost.* A queer thing I once read in an old book about God's children and people being a part of Christ and in union with him. The writer says—"A father sitteth in his room, and there cometh in a stranger; the stranger taketh up a child on his knee, and the child hath a sore finger; so he saith, 'My child, you have a sore finger;' 'Yes!' 'Well, let me take it off, and give thee a golden one!' The child looketh at him and saith, 'I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger; I love my own finger, and I will not have a golden one instead of it.'" So the saint saith, "I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger, and he will take me off and put a golden one on." "No," said Christ, "no, no; I cannot have any of my members taken away; if the finger be a sore one, I will bind it up; I will strengthen it." Christ cannot allow a word about cutting his members off. If Christ lose one of his people, he would not be a whole Christ any longer. If the meanest of his children could be cast away, Christ would lack a part of his fullness; yea, Christ would be incomplete without his Church. If one of his children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one, than a little one. If a little one were lost, Satan would say, "Ah! you save the great ones, because they had strength and could help themselves; but the little one that has no strength, you could not save him." You know what Satan would

say; but God would shut Satan's mouth, by proclaiming, "They are all here, Satan, in spite of thy malice, they are all here; every one is safe; now lie down in thy den for ever, and be bound eternally in chains, and smoke in fire!" So shall *he* suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall.

One thought more and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of some one else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion, you would, speaking after the manner of men, say, that your conversion depended upon hers; for her being converted, made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be the means of your calling; then your conversion, in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens, that the salvation of God's mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother; no one ever knows anything about her; she goes to the house of God, her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else; she teaches her child, and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary—a William Knibb—a Moffat—a Williams. But you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah! but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones; and may you rejoice that he will nourish and cherish you, though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax.

Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY.

"Till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular war, was very touching; he fell in the arms of triumph; and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eye was lit up with lustre by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, "I die happy," having just before heard the shout, "they run, they run." I know victory even in that bad sense—for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value—must have cheered the warrior. But oh! how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write *"vici"* on my shield. I shall be "more than conqueror through him that loved me." Each feeble saint shall win the day; each man upon his crutches; each lame one; each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness, and weakness, shall gain the victory. "They shall come with singing unto Zion; as well the blind, and lame, and halt, and the woman with child, together." So saith the Scripture. Not one shall be left out; but he shall "send forth judgment unto victory." Victory! victory! victory! This is the lot of each Christian; he shall triumph through his dear Redeemer's name.

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women. Dear brethren and sisters, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them; and death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden; you feel full of weakness and decay; your frame can hardly hold together. Ah! you have here a special promise. "The bruised reed I will not break." "I will strengthen thee." "When thy heart and thy flesh faileth, I will be the strength of thy heart and thy portion for ever."

Even down to old age, all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

Tottering on thy staff, leaning, feeble, weak, and wan; fear not the last hour; that last hour shall be thy best; thy last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished. Weak as thou art, God will temper the trial to thy weakness; he will make thy pain less, if thy strength be less; but thou shalt sing in heaven, Victory! victory! victory! There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near heaven—to be so near home. With all your infirmities, your grey hairs are a crown of glory to you; for you are near the end as well as in the way of righteousness.

A word with you middle-aged men, battling in this life's rough storm. You are often bruised reeds, your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax; it is as much as you can do to serve your God, and you cannot say that you are "fervent in spirit" as well as "diligent in business." Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, he will not quench thee when thou art like smoking flax; he will not break thee when thou art like the bruised reed, but will deliver thee from thy troubles, thou shalt swim across the sea of life, and shalt stand on the happy shore of heaven, and shalt sing, "Victory" through him that loved thee.

Ye youths and maidens! I speak to you, and have a right to do so. You and I ofttimes know what the bruised reed is, when the hand of God blights our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness, it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us, for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths, and dangerous ways are the ways of the young, but God will not break or destroy us. Men, by their over caution, bid us never tread a step lest we fall; but God bids us go, and makes our feet like hind's feet that we may tread upon high places. Serve God in early days; give your hearts to him, and then he will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you.

Let me not finish without saying a word to little children. You who have never heard of Jesus, he says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break; the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Saviour.

I never despise infantile piety; I love it. I have heard little children talk of mysteries that grey-headed men knew not. Ah! little children who have been brought up in the Sabbath-schools, and love the Saviour's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Still will look upon a child;
Pity thy simplicity,
And suffer thee to come to him.

He will not cast thee away; for smoking flax he will not quench, and the bruised reed he will not break.